

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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*Published by the Commission on Public Relations
of the National Christian Council of Japan*

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Subscription Rates: Japan ¥700; Foreign (Sea mail) \$2.00; (Air mail) \$3.50.

No. 69

October 1, 1955

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VISITATION EVANGELISM - gaining in popularity

Visitation Evangelism is gradually gaining the support of a wide group of churches. (See JCAN #66, 8/1/55 pp 1-2) Recently the Osaka and the Tokyo Diocese of the Seikokai (Japan Episcopal Church) have started urging their parishes to use this method to reach a wider circle of people for the Church. As mentioned elsewhere in this issue of the JCAN the Evangelistic Committee of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church is strongly urging the use of this method of evangelism to follow up the many contacts made through the popular radio program "The Lutheran Hour". Some of the stronger Baptist churches in this country are also using this method. The United Church of Christ (Kyodan) has long been advocating this method to increase the participation of laymen in evangelistic work.

It is estimated that about 200 churches are now using visitation evangelism. This is about 10% of the total number of Protestant churches in Japan. In addition to this, perhaps 400 churches are showing increasing interest in experimenting with the method.

There are several characteristic features of visitation evangelism in Japan, according to Mr. Ryoichi Masaki, one of the members of the NCC Visitation Evangelism Committee.

1) Whereas in America the evangelism is done directly by the layman who does the visiting, in Japan the visiting layman acts only as a friend and go-between between the pastor and the seeker.

The reason for this is that in the whole city of Tokyo, for example, it is estimated that there would be only about 100 laymen who would be qualified to do direct evangelistic work themselves. This would not substantially increase the number of evangelists here since there are already more than 250 ordained pastors. However, it is estimated that at least one out of every ten regular church attenders would be qualified to work as a go-between for the pastor and the seeker, becoming a close friend of the latter and helping to interpret his problems to the pastor and the pastor's answers and teachings to his friend.

2) The visitor is called a "volunteer" which has become a regular term in Japanese for these workers.

3) The "volunteer" goes every week to cultivate the friendship of each seeker under his care. He writes a report on this visit along with the problems which have come up for the friend and gives this to the pastor. He then gets the answers of the pastor (in writing usually) and helps to interpret these to the friend.

4) There is a special meeting every week at the church at which all of the seekers come together for instruction by the pastor. It must be born in mind that seekers in Japan come out of a context which has usually had little contact with Christianity and must remain in a largely non-Christian environment. Therefore a long period of careful training is necessary.

5) After the baptism of the seeker, the volunteer remains a close friend and brother in the Faith. It is estimated that about one third of those led to Christ through this method in turn themselves become "volunteers" to lead their friends to Christ.

In the Tokyo area there is a bimonthly conference of all volunteers in Kyodan churches. On alternate months there is a meeting of pastors who are carrying on this work in their churches. Of the 14 Kyodan Districts in Japan, 11 have active Visitation Evangelism sub-committees.

"Volunteer" is the name of the monthly newspaper which is published especially for those doing this kind of work. There are 1200 paid subscriptions which make the paper self-supporting.

KYODAN STATISTICS - the state of the church

According to preliminary statistics issued by the Kyodan Office in Tokyo, the following is the state of the Church as of April 1955 as compared to just one year previous.

Churches and evangelistic stations	1,455	inc. 12
Evangelistic stations only	285	42
Total church members	162,397	" 7,636
Pledged church contributions	¥ 123,183,000	" ¥ 34,699,000
Plate offerings	¥ 48,444,000	" ¥ 11,558,000

By way of comment, it may be said that the increase in contributions is particularly remarkable in view of the deflationary period that Japan has been going through during recent years. It is an indication to some that although the membership is not growing as fast as could be wished, the interest and devotion of the members is increasing.

Also of interest are the figures on the average attendance in churches in the Kyodan:

Number of Churches	With average attendance
167	less than 10
264	10 to 20
202	20 to 30
153	30 to 40
89	40 to 50
80	50 to 60
54	60 to 70
40	70 to 80
48	80 to 100
28	100 to 120
2	120 to 200
5	200 to 250
3	250 to 350
1	about 900

Add to these statistics on attendance the fact that only 255 churches have a yearly maintenance income of ¥150,000 (\$415) or more, one can appreciate the great difficulties against which the Japanese pastors are struggling in this non-Christian culture. The devotion required to stick to this difficult and poorly paying work can hardly be over-rated.

LUTHERAN EVANGELISM - four points with a punch

The Evangelism Committee of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church met August 24-25th and decided on a four point program for evangelism during the coming year.

1) Lay Movement. In order to strengthen the lay movement in the Church, they propose that a "Brotherhood of Laymen" group be organized which would strengthen the spirit of brotherhood among fellow believers. This brotherhood would also help take responsibility for the finances of the Church.

2) The Lutheran Hour. The Japanese version of "The Lutheran Hour" has been having a remarkable success both in listening audience and in numbers of people who write in for information about Christianity as a result. The production of this program has cost over ¥3,000,000 a year. The plan of the Evangelism Committee is to urge that local churches use the Visitation Evangelism method in following up these contacts which are made through mail.

3) The Centenary Movement. In preparation for the next century of Christian work in Japan, the youth of today must be reached. It is proposed that especial emphasis be placed on the evangelism of youth during the next year.

4) Self Support. There are 66 churches and 22 evangelistic stations in the Japan Evangelical Church. Of this total of 88, only 19 are self supporting and 15 are semi-self supporting. There is a keenly felt need to increase the self supporting character of the Church. To this end there will be an effort to get the 15 partially independant churches to become fully self supporting during this year. Rev. Tasaka, Chairman of the Evangelism Committee and Rev. Makise, President of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church will travel to eight different cities to have area-wide meetings of Church leaders in an effort to impliment this goal.

BIBLE DISTRIBUTION - a "Bible Van" and twenty colporteurs

The Japan Bible Society has been presented with a travelling display car by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Made to especial order here in Japan, it is going first to Sendai to start its ministry of education on, and distribution of Bibles and Bible tracts. For people in the rural districts who know little about the great variety of publications of the Bible and Bible portions, this "Bible Van" will make possible a graphic display. Another function which this "Bible Van" will be able to fill will be to try to interest more book stores in carrying copies of the Bible for sale.

Starting this fall and running until Christmas, more than twenty colporteurs will be working in five Prefectures. These are: Iwate, Gifu, Tokushima, Kochi, and Kumamoto. In preparation for this special distribution campaign, contacts were made wherever possible with local ministers and missionaries. However, in case some have been missed who would like to cooperate with the colporteurs, they are urged to get in touch with Rev. Tsunetaro Miyakoda, Secretary of the Japan Bible Society, 2 Ginza 4 chome, Tokyo.

The present rate of selling Bibles published in English is about 20,000 a year. About 50,000 copies of the combined English and Japanese New Testament are being sold each year.

EVANGELISM OF THE BLIND - Smith visits Japan

Dr. Dwight C. Smith, General Secretary of the John Milton Society for the Blind, arrived in Japan last month. On October 2 a public meeting for the blind is being held at Fujimicho Church in Tokyo. He will travel around the country visiting centers of evangelism for the blind during this month. On October 17-18 he will confer with leaders of the work of evangelism for the blind at the National Conference to be held in Tokyo.

COMING EVENTS

October 17-18 ALL LUTHERAN FREE CONFERENCE in Kyoto. Topic:

"Lutheran Unity in Japan" Japanese church leaders and missionaries invited. In the September meeting of the Special Study Committee on Lutheran Unification in Japan it was found that there is a sizable unity on questions of doctrine. The main problems still remaining revolve around matters of organization. The report of this Study Commission will be presented at the Kyoto Conference.

October 21-22 Kwansai Area Kyodan Related MISSIONARY CONFERENCE will be held Friday and Saturday, the place and other details to be announced later. Dr. Mary Ely Lyman, recently of Union Theological Seminary in the field of New Testament will be the principal speaker.

November 2-3 NATIONAL MISSION CONFERENCE The annual National Mission Conference of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan will be held simultaneously in two regional sections. The eastern regional group will meet in Tokyo and the Western one in Osaka. Two lay representatives and the pastor from each church are to be invited. All interested missionaries are welcomed. The purpose is to think, pray and plan for the evangelistic mission of the Church. Dr. Harold Bosley will speak at each of the regional sections.

Oct. 23-30 Harold Bosley, "Deepening the Spiritual Life", a series of talks at Union Church in Tokyo, Oct 23, 11 AM, 24, 26, 28 evenings at 7:30, Oct. 30, 4:00 PM.

TRAVELING VISITORS - welcome to Japan

During this month and next a number of distinguished visitors are traveling and speaking in Japan:

Dr. and Mrs. Sherwood Eddy of YM-YW and ecumenical Christian fame, and Dr. and Mrs. James G. Gilkey for 65 years a successful pastor in one of the largest New England churches, will travel and speak all over Japan from October 19-Nov. 4, under the sponsorship of the NCC Centenary Committee.

Dr. Jerome Davis educator and sociologist will travel with the above party under the sponsorship of the Kyodan Occupational Evangelism Committee.

Dr. Harold Boseley, pastor of 1st Methodist Church, Evanston, former Dean of Duke Divinity School will be speaking at several gatherings. He has especial interest in the seminaries and their work.

Dr. Dwight C. Smith's visit is announced on page 4 of this issue.

